



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

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Consumer Advisory

New E911 Surcharge in effect July 1, 2015

On June 18, 2015, the Department of Telecommunications and Cable (“DTC”) approved a petition filed by the State 911 Department to increase the monthly 911 surcharge from \$0.75 to \$1.25, effective July 1, 2015. The DTC also approved a reduction in the surcharge to \$1.00, effective July 1, 2016. All telephone customers, regardless of technology, pay the monthly surcharge for each line capable of accessing the 911 system.

Below please find common questions and answers about the surcharge. For more information, you may contact the DTC Consumer Division Hotline at 1-800-392-6066.

Q: When did the 911 surcharge on my bill increase?

A: The increased surcharge became effective July 1, 2015.

Q: Who approved the increase to the surcharge?

A: The State 911 Department petitioned the DTC for the increase, and the DTC determined that the increased surcharge is necessary to cover the State 911 Department’s expenditures associated with providing 911 services, including the implementation of a new “Next Generation 911” system.

Q: Why is the increase in the surcharge necessary?

A: The increased surcharge is necessary to fund the construction and implementation of the Next Generation 911 system in Massachusetts. The current 911 system is out-of-date and nearing the end of its useful life as 911 call centers use equipment that cannot receive text messages, videos, pictures, or certain calls from computers. In addition, the location of calls made on cell phones can be difficult for today’s call centers to accurately pinpoint. And when calls overwhelm a call center—such as during a natural disaster or even a vehicle crash—they cannot be transferred between centers or rerouted, which can leave citizens without needed aid. The increased surcharge will fund the construction and rollout of the new Next Generation 911 system, which will add many of these capabilities and be faster and more efficient, increasing public safety. The surcharge will be reduced to \$1.00 July 1, 2016. The implementation of the Next Generation 911 system is required by law and will be occurring in every state. The 911 surcharge had remained unchanged at \$0.75 since 2007.



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Q: What are the benefits of the Next Generation 911 system?

A: Upgrading to Next Generation 911 transforms an outdated, analog public safety system into a digital network that is faster, more efficient, and safer for the public and for law enforcement. With the new system, 911 callers will be able to send text, picture, and video messages to 911. The new system also will be able to more accurately pinpoint from where a call is made. For example, when a call is made from a cell phone in a multi-dwelling unit such as an apartment building, the new system will be able to identify from which unit, specifically, the call is made.

Q: What notice about the increased surcharge was provided?

A: Notice of the State 911 Department's Petition to increase the surcharge was published in the *Boston Globe* on March 31, 2015. The DTC received public comments on the Petition, and held a public hearing on the Petition on May 1, 2015. The Petition and Final Order approving the surcharge can be found on the DTC's website under Docket 15-2: <https://services.oca.state.ma.us/dtc/frmDocketList.aspx>.

Q: I have a traditional landline phone/do not text, why do I have to bear the cost of the new 911 system?

A: The old 911 system is nearing the end of its useful life and must be replaced. Additionally, the new 911 system will be faster and more efficient for all phone technologies, including traditional landline phones. Finally, it is likely that someone you know (e.g., child, grandchild, friend, nurse/healthcare provider) uses text messaging and this capability may enable them to protect their own life or the life of another.

Q: I have never dialed 911, why do I have to pay the surcharge?

A: The 911 system is in place as a contingency in the event it is ever needed. All telephone customers pay the monthly surcharge. The surcharge is required by law.

Q: When can I begin texting to 911?

A: The new 911 system is not fully deployed at this time. For information on the deployment of the system, including when these new capabilities will become available in Massachusetts, please visit www.mass.gov/e911.

For additional questions, please contact the DTC Consumer Division Hotline at 617 305-3531 or 1-800-392-6066.

Also, for important information and tips about telephone service during emergencies, please see the DTC's brochure, available at <http://www.mass.gov/ocabr/docs/dtc/telecom/connected-emergencies-9-24-13.pdf>.

